

Week Ending Friday, December 29, 2000

**Remarks on Signing the
Departments of Labor, Health and
Human Services, and Education, and
Related Agencies Appropriations
Act, 2001**

December 21, 2000

Sit down. Thank you. You just have to do what I ask for a few more days. *[Laughter]*

First, I'd like to thank the very large delegation from the United States Congress and both parties who are here: Senator Specter, Senator Conrad, Senator Dorgan; from the House, Chairman Goodling, Representative Obey, Representative Kildee, Representative Kelly, Representative Talent, Representative Porter, Lowey, and Clement. Did I get everybody? *[Laughter]*

I'd like to thank the mayor of Philadelphia, John Street, for joining us; and our neighbor, the Prince George's County Executive, Wayne Curry; and the members of the Cabinet who are here: Secretaries Riley, Shalala, Summers, Herman, Slater; EPA Director Browner; SBA Director Alvarez. Did I leave anybody out? Chief of Staff Podesta and my Economic Adviser Gene Sperling. And I'd like to thank Jack Lew and Sylvia Mathews and all the people on the budget team who worked so hard at OMB for this.

This is a good day for our country. For 8 years now, we have worked in this administration to prepare our country for the new century and a whole new era of human affairs by building a nation in which there is opportunity for every responsible citizen, a community of all Americans, and a nation that leads the world toward greater peace and freedom and prosperity. Today we have two more examples of that in implementing our strategy of trying to make the right, real choices for America and not be trapped in the old, false choices.

Earlier today, this morning, we announced new steps to preserve our environment by cleaning our air, steps that will protect the

health of all Americans by dramatically reducing pollution from trucks and buses powered by diesel fuel, building on the announcements last year to reduce pollution from cars and sports utility vehicles. Together, these measures will preserve our environment and protect thousands of children from the agony of asthma and other respiratory diseases. By the end of the decade, because of these steps, every new vehicle sold in the United States will be up to 95 percent cleaner than those rolling off the assembly line today.

Again, this was the right, real choice, proving once again that we can grow the economy and improve the environment at the same time. And I want to thank Carol Browner for her work on this. She's here. Thank you.

Now, in a few moments it will be my honor to sign the very last budget bill I will sign as President. And in so many ways, it could truly be said, we saved the best for last. This bill is called the Labor-HHS appropriation bill. But more than anything else, it's a bill about these children behind me today, about their hopes, their dreams, their capacity to learn, and their need to learn about their future and the future of our country. Again, it is further proof, as the evidence of these distinguished Members of Congress from both parties prove, that when we put progress ahead of partisanship, there's no limit to what we can do for America and our future.

We are now in the longest economic expansion in our history. A critical part of our strategy to get there was to put our fiscal house in order, to replace record deficits with record surpluses. With this budget, in spite of the investments—and I would argue because, in part, of past investments—we are going to be able to pay off another \$200 billion of our national debt, on track to paying down \$560 billion of the national debt over the last 4 years and this year. And because together we made the right, real choices, we

were able to increase investment in the things that matter most. That's what this budget bill does today.

And let me just begin with education. Under Secretary Riley's leadership, we have worked hard to make the right, real choice—to have more investment and higher standards, more accountability, and spend the money on the things that the educators tell us work best. Test scores are up today, with some of the greatest gains coming in some of the most disadvantaged communities. Two-thirds of our high school graduates are going on to college; that's up 10 percent from 1993. In the last few years, there has been a 300-percent increase in the number of Hispanic students taking advanced placement courses and a 500-percent increase in the number of African-American students doing so.

With the largest student enrollment in our entire history, and the most diverse student body in our entire history, education must be priority number one for any administration. With this budget, while turning the largest deficits in history into the largest surpluses, we also will have more than doubled funding for education during the life of this administration. This clearly is the biggest and best education budget in our Nation's history, and it will make a difference in the lives of millions of young people. Let me just give a couple of examples.

Our first-ever initiative to renovate classrooms will mean that, over time, millions of children will attend more modern, more dignified, more functional schools. This is about moving out of house trailers, and it's about going to school in old buildings that provide modern education.

With \$1.6 billion on its way to help communities with smaller classrooms, we will help roughly 2 million children learn in smaller classes, with more individualized attention in the early grades. With nearly \$1 billion more for Head Start, the largest increase in history, we'll have more than doubled the program, adding 60,000 more kids to this quality preschool program this year alone.

There is a dramatic increase in child care in this budget that, along with the child care funds provided in welfare reform, will help

more than 2.2 million kids next year, an increase in nearly a million just since 1997. By over doubling funding for after-school programs, we are providing 650,000 more students with a safe place to learn, bringing to 1.3 million the number of young people benefiting from this after-school initiative, something that did not even exist 4 years ago.

With another major increase in the GEAR UP program, 1.2 million disadvantaged children will now be preparing for college as early as the sixth grade. Together with one of the largest increases in the TRIO program ever, we are building greater pathways to college for economically disadvantaged young people.

This bill has the largest increase ever in Pell grants. We've now increased the maximum grant by nearly \$1,500 since 1993, for 4 million young people every year from low and moderate income families. This significant expansion of Pell grants is part of the biggest expansion in college aid since the GI bill, including the direct student loan program, which has saved students \$8 billion already in loan repayment costs, and the HOPE scholarship tax cut, which 10 million families are benefiting from this year.

I want to say to all of you who worked on this—to Chairman Goodling and Mr. Kildee, Mr. Obey, all the other Members of the House; and to you, Senator Specter, and the other Senators who are here; and most of all to you, Secretary Riley, who is now the longest serving and, I believe, clearly the finest Education Secretary our country ever had—I thank you all very much. Thank you. This education budget is a real tribute to the bipartisan work of this Congress, and I am very grateful.

The budget also makes good on our commitment to help every community share in our Nation's prosperity. This is a big deal to me, and also to America's future. About 18 months ago, I began the first of what I called new markets tours, to shine a spotlight on people and places that had been left behind in this long and remarkable recovery. I wanted every American investor to see the potential of these communities and the promise of the people who live there.

I knew that government couldn't do it alone and that, in fact, we would have to find

a way to get more private investment into these communities. But I also knew that business could not be expected to go it alone, that we had to find some way to bring hope and opportunity home to these communities.

Now, at the same time, to be fair, there were people in the Congress who were interested in this who were struggling for some bipartisan consensus to bring free enterprise to parts of America that have been left behind. Among them, in the House, were Representative Talent, who is here, and J.C. Watts and Danny Davis, who represents Chicago but, like me, was born in Arkansas. And there were other groups that were looking at this.

So we all worked together to give you a budget that delivers something that I believe is truly unique and significant. It includes the landmark new markets and community renewal initiative. It's the most significant effort ever to help hard-pressed areas, both rural and urban, to lift themselves up through private investment and entrepreneurship. It is a triumph of bipartisanship. And again, I want to thank those whom I just mentioned—especially you, Mr. Talent—and I want to thank the Speaker of the House, Dennis Hastert, who went to Chicago with me and Reverend Jackson and without whom we could not have passed this important initiative.

Here's what it does. First, it establishes the first-ever new markets tax credit. It sets up a new market venture capital initiative. Now, what does all that mean? It basically means if we can get people to put money into really depressed areas, all the rest of America will share part of the risk by giving them a tax credit to do it. And it's a darn good investment.

We also expanded and strengthened 40 empowerment zones; that's the program our administration has run for the last 8 years under the able leadership of Vice President Gore. And we created 40 renewal communities across our Nation; that's an alternative designed essentially by Republicans in the House, with the Democrats who worked with them. And we decided that since nobody knows how to do this, we ought to try in 40 places with each approach and see which one works better, and see what works better with

each approach. It's a terrific idea, and I only wish I was going to be around when all the results come in. *[Laughter]*

But over the next—sometime over the next, I'd say, 2 to 4 years, probably more like a 4-year period, we'll actually have evidence of what happened in the 40 empowerment zones, what happened in the 40 renewal communities. That Congress will take the evidence and, I hope, as a result of that evidence, will then enact legislation that will permanently establish a framework for always encouraging America to invest in the areas that otherwise would be left behind.

And if, like me, you've spent a lot of time in the Mississippi Delta or Appalachia or inner-city neighborhoods or on Native American reservations, you doubtless have concluded, as I have, that intelligence is pretty equally distributed throughout this country and so is the work ethic. But we have not yet equally distributed opportunity and access to capital. We're trying to figure out how to do it. This is a truly historic day, and we did it together, and I am very grateful. Thank you.

This budget also does more to improve health care and to strengthen families and community. And again, I want to thank the Members of Congress who are here who had primary responsibility for the health care issues, and Secretary Shalala, who has also been with me from day one. And we were together yesterday with our sweeping health care privacy announcement. She may be the only one of us that is absolutely convinced she is getting a promotion, because she's going to become president of the University of Miami—*[laughter]*—and she gets a football team, which she does not have in her present job. Thank you.

This budget includes options for States to enroll tens of thousands of uninsured children in the Medicaid program by using schools, public housing, and other sites easily acceptable to parents and children.

Let me explain why this is important. We have got 2.5—since the Congress—in the balanced budget bill, Congress adopted the CHIP program, the Children's Health Insurance Program, 1997. Since then, 2.5 million *

* White House correction

kids have been enrolled. And as a result, this year, for the first time in 12 years, the number of people without health insurance in the United States went down—for the first time in 12 years. But the money is there for five million kids to be enrolled. And we know, from the evidence of all of the States that have been particularly vigorous, that if we can just find the kids, their parents will sign up.

This program provides funds so that we can do CHIP enrollment in schools, public housing, and other places where the people are. It also provides options for States to help low-income seniors enroll in programs that cover their Medicare premiums and copayments. It provides critical support to those moving from welfare to work by ensuring that working does not mean losing your health care. It ensures quality health care services for people on Medicare by investing about \$30 billion in hospitals, home health agencies, hospices, nursing homes, and managed care plans.

And this is very important. I admire the Congress for doing this. We adopted the Balanced Budget Act in '97. We adopted some substantive changes in our Medicare program that we thought would produce a certain level of savings. They produced more savings than we estimated, at great cost to the quality of health care, or the capacity of our providers to do it. So they asked us to make some corrections, and we did. And that's what this is. It's a very, very good thing for America.

The other thing this bill does, that I think will be very important to people for a very long time, is that it expands preventive benefits like cancer and glaucoma screenings for Medicare beneficiaries. It creates a new program to provide people with disabilities with community-based health care services, and it increases fundings for AIDS prevention, research, and treatment.

Also, it includes a \$20.3 billion investment in biomedical research, nearly doubling since 1993 our investment in the National Institutes of Health. And I would like to say a special word of thanks to a retiring Member of Congress, Representative John Porter, who's been a great leader in this. Thank you very much.

The bill provides \$11.9 billion in funding for the Department of Labor, for funding from job training to eliminating abusive child labor practices and promoting education around the world. Nearly 900,000 dislocated workers will receive support and assistance in their efforts to return to work.

Secretary Herman's here. I'd like to thank her for many things, and 8 years of service in this administration, 4 in the White House and then as Secretary of Labor. But one of the relatively little noticed but, I think, profoundly important initiatives that this administration has undertaken is to try to eliminate abusive child labor in the United States and everywhere it exists in the world. And I thank you for your leadership in that regard. I thank you very much.

Finally, the bill would allow nearly 700,000 immigrants who have worked, lived, and paid taxes in the United States for years to stay here legally without fear of being separated from their families.

When I outlined our budget priorities in the State of the Union last January, I urged Congress to work with me to pass a fiscally responsible budget that would be true to our values and invest in the capacity and future of the American people. I recall the good advice of President Theodore Roosevelt, who said that a growing nation with a future takes the long look ahead. This budget takes the long look ahead, to educate our children, renew our communities, and build our common future. I am very proud of it and very grateful. If we stay on this course, our best days are ahead.

Thank you very much. Now I'd like the Congress and the members of the administration to come up.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:03 p.m. in Presidential Hall in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. H.R. 4577, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2001, approved December 21, incorporating H.R. 5656, the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2001, was assigned Public Law No. 106-554. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

**Statement on Signing the
Consolidated Appropriations
Act, FY 2001**

December 21, 2000

I have signed into law H.R. 4577, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, FY 2001. I am pleased that my Administration and the Congress were able to reach agreement on the remaining appropriations bills and produce a hard-won victory for the American people.

The legislation reflects my Administration's longstanding commitment to education, worker training and assistance, and medical research, and continued opposition to unrelated anti-environmental riders, which have no place in these appropriation bills. As a result of extensive negotiations, my Administration was able to secure significant funding increases for many programs that represent significant victories for the American people, including teacher training, class size reduction, worker protection programs, and mental health programs.

I am very pleased that the legislation creates a new \$1.2 billion school renovation grant program, targeted to high-need districts. It provides \$0.9 billion for urgent school repairs, including \$75 million for public schools with high concentrations of Native American students, \$0.3 billion for special education and technology-related activities, and \$25 million for a demonstration program to assist charter schools in obtaining non-Federal financing for their infrastructure needs. The initiative will enable schools to undertake much-needed renovation, such as repairs to roofs, heating and cooling systems, and electrical wiring.

The bill also provides \$1.6 billion for the third installment of my plan to help reduce class size in the early grades. While the Republican proposal did not guarantee funding for the teachers already hired and would have instead allowed Class Size dollars to be used for virtually any activity, I am pleased that the bill that I have signed provides \$1.6 billion for Class Size Reduction, enough to support the over 29,000 teachers already hired, plus an additional 8,000 teachers.

I am also pleased that the budget agreement provides \$567 million for my Teaching to High Standards plan to improve teacher

preparation and help train teachers to meet higher standards. This funding level is \$194 million more than last year's level. The bill includes \$485 million for Eisenhower Professional Development State Grants, providing training for as many as 2.3 million teachers and strengthening accountability by requiring that States and districts use new Eisenhower funds to reduce the number of uncertified teachers in their schools. The bill also provides \$44 million for new national-level activities, including initiatives to train early childhood educators and measures to recruit talented mid-career professionals into teaching.

The legislation provides \$846 million for 21st Century Community Learning Centers to support after school and summer school programs that make extended learning opportunities available for students and offer a safe place for "latch-key" children to learn during the after-school hours. At this funding level, nearly 650,000 more students than last year will have access to these services.

I am very pleased that Title I Grants to Local Education Agencies are funded at \$8.4 billion, an increase of \$0.4 billion more than last year, to continue efforts to help disadvantaged students catch up with their peers. In addition, the bill supports my Accountability Fund proposal by providing \$225 million, an increase of \$91 million, to help States turn around the lowest-performing schools and hold schools accountable for results. This funding level will provide help to 4,500 schools, an increase of 1,800 over last year.

I am pleased that the bill provides an increase in funding to \$286 million for the Reading Excellence Initiative. This program supports literacy services for children, including local reading programs, teacher training, tutoring programs, and family literacy services. With this funding, all the remaining States and territories will be able to receive grants, bringing the number of children served to 3.1 million.

I am pleased that the budget agreement provides \$872 million for educational technology that will be used to fund programs that train an additional 110,000 teachers to effectively use modern technology in the classroom. The bill also provides a \$32 million increase for Community Technology